

WASHINGTON, DC - Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer spoke on the House Floor today in support of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:

"This Defense Authorization bill is about securing our nation in stronger and smarter ways. It builds on our strong Democratic record of putting new and better weapons into the battlefield; increasing support for human intelligence collection, cybersecurity, and security for our skies, our ports, and our borders; and looking out for our troops, our veterans, and their families.

"This bill authorizes crucial national security programs for Fiscal Year 2011. It promotes efforts to disrupt and destroy terrorist networks and strengthens the ability of our special forces to act directly against terrorist organizations. It increases our international cooperation against terrorists, especially against the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Because of the changing threats in the post-Cold War world, this bill also invests in ballistic missile defense and nuclear counterproliferation, including the President's effort to secure all of the world's known vulnerable nuclear material in the next four years.

"The Defense Authorization bill also supports the wellbeing of our troops and the strength of our Armed Forces. It keeps TRICARE strong and ensures that military families can keep their children on TRICARE policies up to the age of 26. It also reduces strain on our forces by providing for 7,000 more personnel for the Army and 500 for the Air Force, while helping all of the services rebuild their worn-down equipment and weapons systems.

"But this bill is personally important to me for another reason, Mr. Speaker. It's named after my good friend, Congressman Ike Skelton, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. Chairman Skelton has represented the people of Missouri for 34 years. He has stood up for the interests and ideals of people across his district, from rural towns to some of our Nation's most important military bases. He has been a workhorse of a Congressman: always well-informed, always public-spirited, and always passionate about serving our Nation and its security.

"For many years, Ike Skelton has been one of America's leading voices on defense policy—and the decisions he made as Chairman will shape the future of our country, for the

better, for many years to come. I am proud to have served with him. And I am proud to support this important bill, which he did so much to shape, and which fittingly bears his name."